



News Release

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State recognizes historic Riverside landmark

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Jackson Building, once the site of a thriving Japanese-American business in the early 20th century, has been listed on the California Register of Historical Resources.

The two-story brick building at 3643 University Avenue was once the site of the Washington Restaurant, operated by the Harada family. Jukichi Harada, the head of the household, made international headlines when he bought a Riverside home in the names of his three American-born children in 1915, which challenged the California Alien Land Law prohibiting aliens from owning property. In 1918, Riverside Superior Court ruled that American-born children of aliens were entitled to all the constitutional guarantees of citizenship including land tenure.

Already a City Historic Landmark, the Jackson Building was built in 1886 and saw service as a poultry shop, hardware store, real estate office, the YMCA hall, a sausage factory, print shop and a cabinetmaker workshop. By 1905 it was converted into a restaurant and leased in 1911 by Harada who ran the Washington Restaurant for the next 30 years, though the business later changed location in 1925.

“This is not only associated with the Harada family, it was a big part of the Japanese commercial district of Riverside,” said William Burg, a historian with the California Office of Historic Preservation. “This building played a role in that community, and there are very few physical signs of ‘Japantowns’ anymore.”

An application was filed last year, seeking state status for the building. The State Historical Resources Commission designated the building to the California Register of Historical Resources July 31.

“It doesn’t afford any additional protection,” said Jennifer Mermilliod, a private Riverside historic consultant. “It does elevate its importance and gives the public access to the story of the site. It’s not just about pretty architecture; it’s conveying broad patterns of our own history. In this case, it’s the experience of early Japanese immigrants.”

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